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Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUWAIT 04239 310913Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 /011 W
----------021806 310935Z /15 R
R 310812Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8644
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 4239

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SHUM, KU
SUBJECT: LEADING KUWAITI POLITICAL CLUB DISSOLVED

REF: (A) 76 KUWAIT 5996, (B) KUWAIT 2590,
(C) STATE 144332, (D) KUWAIT 3556.

1. THE KUWAIT PRESS REPORTS THAT, BY MINISTERIAL ORDER DATED JULY 27, THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOR SALEM AL-SABAH, DIRECTED THAT THE ISTIQIAL CLUB BE COMPLETELY DISSOLVED AND THAT, AFTER PAYMENT OF DEBTIS, ITS ASSETS BE DIVIDED AMONG THE MEMBERSHIP. THE ORDER CITED "DEVIATIONS" FROM THE LAW GOVERNING ALL KUWAITI SOCIAL CLUBS AND SOCIETIES AS THE CAUSE OF THE DISSOLUTION. IT ALSO ALLEGED THAT THE MEMBERSHIP HAD REFUSED TO COOPERATE WITH THE "TEMPORARY DIRECTORSHIP" OF THE CLUB WHICH HAD BEEN PICKED TO REPLACE THE EX-LEADERS IN DECEMBER 1976 (REF A).

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2. COMMENT: THEISTIQLAL CLUB WAS THE CLOSEST THING TO A REFORMIST/LEFTIST OPPOSITION PARTY IN KUWAIT--POLITICAL PARTIES ARE BANNED. IT WAS ALSO THE ONLY ORGANIZATION WHICH WAS OVERTLY POLITICAL IN THE SENSE THAT IT NEVER PRETENDED TO BE ANYTHING OTHER THAN A DISCUSSION GROUP (OPEN ONLY TO KUWAITIS AND INVITED SPEAKERS) AND A FOCAL POINT FOR PROGRESSIVE AND SOMETIMES RADICAL POLITICAL VCFWS.

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THE GOK'S ACTION AGAINST IT IS LIKEWISE UNPRECE-
DENTED. AS NOTED IN REF A, KUWAITI AUTHORITIES HAD B
REMOVED AND REPLACED THE LEADERSHIP OF A NUMBER OF ORGANI-
ZATIONS IN LATE 1976, FOLLOWING A PATTERN WHICH HAD BECOME
FAMILIAR BE DECEMBER, WHEN THE ISTIQLAL CLUB'S LEADER-
SHIP WAS REPLACED. THE GOK HAS NOW TAKEN A STEP BEYOND
THIS PATTERN, ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE "REMEDY" APPLIED
IN DECEMBER WAS INSUFFICIENT. THE ABOLITION OF THIS
ORGANIZATION IS CONTRARY TO THE TREND TOWARD LOOSENING OF
POLITICAL CONTROLS WHICH WE NOTED IN MAY (REF B), AND IT
INDICATES THAT KUWAIT'S RULERS DO INTEND TO CONTINUE
CLOSE POLITICAL CONTROL OVER THE TRADITIONAL CLUBS AND
PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES, MOST OF WHICH HAVE SOME DOMESTIC
POLITICAL FLAVOR.

3. REGARDING THE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS OF THE
DISSOLUTION OF THE ISTIQLAL CLUB, WE DO NOT BELIEVE
THAT THIS GOK STEP PORTENDS A GENERAL MOVE AGAINST
FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY OR OTHER RIGHTS ENJOYED BY KUWAITI
CITIZENS. (REF C AND D CONTAIN RECENT AND STILL
ACCURATE DISCUSSIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN KUWAIT.)
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
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Disposition Remarks:
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Subject: LEADING KUWAITI POLITICAL CLUB DISSOLVED
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